

**STATE PLAN FOR ALABAMA HIGHER EDUCATION
2003-04 To 2008-09**

TRUSTEE REPORT

**BY
SOUTHERN UNION STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

JUNE 7, 2005

GOAL 1 –ACCESS

Southern Union State Community College is a public two-year college located in East Central Alabama. Its service area includes Randolph, Chambers, and portions of Lee, Clay, Macon, Cleburne, Russell, and Tallapoosa counties, a population of approximately 320,000. The college's three campuses are located in Wadley, Valley, and Opelika. During each of the past five fall terms, the college has served almost 5000 students enrolled in credit courses offered in both day and night schedules and many more in non-credit continuing education and workforce training programs. The college mission statement addresses accessibility through open admissions, developmental education, affordable tuition, convenient scheduling, distance education, and user friendly services.

Accessibility is central to the college mission and it is enhanced through the following programs and practices. Through the student services division, students are admitted to college credit courses if they have a high school diploma or high school equivalency certification. Upon admission, they are assessed to determine competencies and placed in individually prescribed remedial courses if test results indicate. Students are advised on which courses will fulfill their desired career goals and assisted each term with choosing schedules. More than fifty percent of Southern Union students receive some form of financial aid. To enhance accessibility, the college will offer 35 on-line courses and a number of video-classes via distance education in fall term. The college currently has dual enrollment agreements with 39 high schools whose students enroll in both transfer and technical courses, and accelerated high school admission is available for high school students who have completed the tenth grade. Students are able to move easily between two-year colleges because of common course numbering and titling, common course competencies, and similar master calendars.

The most rapidly growing sector of the college is the adult education and skills training division. Through this division, GED preparation is offered in four counties of the college service area and Southern Union's program received an "A" for overall performance in the most recent statewide evaluation. Also through the division of skills training, out-of-work adults are counseled, tested, and placed in non-credit training programs with job placement following training. The college has a Focused Industry Training Program for short-term pre-employment training, and other industry specific training programs are designed and offered upon request. These special training vehicles are designed to reach the nontraditional college student and contribute to the economic health of the state.

The college hosts a variety of meetings, visitations, and competitions annually. Such events as Focus on Careers; recruiting visitations for students and parents; academic competitive tournaments for high school students in mathematics, business, language and fine arts, and social science; and state competitions in academic and vocational trade areas like the State High School Welding Competition and the State Community and Technical College Welding Competition are hosted by the college.

GOAL 2 –COOPERATION

Southern Union engages in cooperative efforts with other two-year colleges, with area high schools, with state universities, and with area businesses, industries, economic development groups, and chambers of commerce.

Through inter-institutional agreements allowed by the State Board of Education the college is able to offer services or special programs at locations in the state outside the college's specified service area if such services are needed to serve citizens or business and industry. Southern Union has frequently offered emergency medical training in areas where it was otherwise unavailable. The college has also staffed a specialized welding training program in the Mobile area that was a cooperative effort between three two-year colleges and the Alabama Industrial Development Training Institute. Additionally, Southern Union is one of thirteen two-year colleges that form a federally funded microelectronics consortium which focuses on preparing students for employment in the microelectronics and semiconductor industries.

The college cooperates with area high schools through offering an accelerated high school program to honor students who have completed tenth grade. They may enroll in credit courses for which they have completed high school prerequisites. This program served 150 students from over forty high schools last year. The college's dual credit/dual enrollment program allows high school students to be concurrently enrolled in high school and baccalaureate degree creditable courses. With permission from their high school, students may attend a Southern Union campus, enroll in on-line courses, or attend a Southern Union class offered at their high school location. High school career technical students may attend college-level career technical courses under a specialized dual enrollment agreement. Tech Prep agreements are in place with eleven secondary schools that provide for the articulation of a maximum of fifteen credit hours for technical programs.

Cooperation with universities is best exemplified by the articulation agreement that exists between two-year colleges and state four-year colleges and universities. The agreement ensures the seamless transfer of community college credit hours toward the bachelors degree if students follow a STARS guide which creates the transfer contract. During the last year Southern Union was the sixth greatest user of STARS among the state two-year colleges and issued over 3700 STARS contracts through its student advising function. Another example of cooperation is the Alabama Community College Leadership Academy, a certification program to prepare future Alabama community college leaders offered at the University of Alabama. Southern Union annually sends a participant to this program. Southern Union is currently cooperating with Auburn University to initiate a joint program between Southern Union and the university to establish an "Academy of Technical Business" which would provide a minor in technical systems for the College of Business. Auburn students would take some core courses for the minor at Southern Union.

The college participates in many outreach program activities and organizations that promote the marketing of the college and its programs. The president is a member of the Board of Directors for the I-85 Corridor Alliance, a regional initiative to promote industry and education along Interstate 85 from Montgomery to Georgia. The president is also a member of the Region 5

Workforce Development Board and active in developing the annual plan of operation. The College is a member of all local Chambers of Commerce and participates regularly in their activities. College personnel serve on area secondary education advisory boards to ensure continuity of programs for students. College representatives are members of the Lee/Chambers Career Technical Association which meets quarterly to discuss curricula and student opportunities, and the College hosts their annual meeting.

GOAL 3 – QUALITY

Southern Union is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Additional specialized accreditations include Associate Degree and Practical Nursing Programs accredited by the Alabama Board of Nursing and The National League for Nursing; Emergency Medical Services accredited by the Alabama Department of Public Health and The Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Professions; Radiologic Technology accredited by the Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Radiologic Sciences; and Surgical Operating Room Technology accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Programs.

The college offers a two-year Associate in Science Degree for transfer students; the Associate in Applied Science Degree in three health science programs and six technical programs for technical students; and the Associate in Occupational Technologies in six technical programs for students whose goals are to gain, maintain, or retrain into high-wage, high-demand technical careers that require multi-functional primary and secondary occupational or technical specialty skills. Certificate programs are offered for shorter term technical training. Through the Adult Education and Skills Training Division, short-term, non-credit classes that vary in length from six weeks to 52 weeks are offered to students with the goal of self-sufficient job placement at the end of training. Each program is designed and evaluated in terms of the mission of the college, the resources of the college, and the needs of students.

Academic faculty are qualified by virtue of a masters degree with 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching field. Technical faculty hold at least an associate degree with specialized course work in their teaching area and at least three years experience as a practitioner in the field. The percentage of full-time faculty exceeds the national average at two year colleges.

Southern Union has an on-going process of assessment of instructional programs and learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are defined in course competencies and objectives. The assessment measures are designed to measure student achievement and to ensure the quality of the curricula and instruction offered by all departments of the college. Each department in the Academic, Health Science, and Technical Divisions issues an annual assessment report which details the assessment measures, analyzes the results, and identifies ways in which the results of assessment have been used to improve the programs of instruction. The program outcomes assessment includes the ACT-CAAP, licensure exams, post transfer GPA comparative data, a graduate survey, and job placement data.

Learning Resource Centers located on each campus provide access to over 90,000 physical volumes as well as items of micro format; non-print items; local, state, and national newspapers; and periodicals. All libraries provide computer resources for student use. The college also provides open computer labs and study centers for students to utilize tutorial software and do special assignments.

In the college's most recent AACC/ACT Faces of the Future Survey, 84% of Southern Union students indicated that they were satisfied with the College, a percentage that exceeds the national user group percentage. Periodically, the College administers the ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) which measures selected academic skills which are foundational to performance in upper-level courses. On the most recent ACT-CAAP, administered fall term 2004, Southern Union students scored above the national norms in writing skills and reading and only slightly below the national norms in mathematics. Data collected on Southern Union students who transfer to four-year institutions indicate that graduation rates and GPA's for Southern Union transfer students continue to be comparable to or greater than the rates for native students at transfer institutions.

A student organization that measures academic quality is the Phi Theta Kappa, an international honorary for recognizing academic achievement in two-year colleges. Membership is extended to full-time students with a GPA of 3.25. The Iota Iota chapter at Southern Union was chartered in 1957 and has been active since that time regularly receiving regional and national awards in the hallmarks of scholarship, leadership, fellowship, and service. Approximately 200 students receive invitations for PTK membership each term.

GOAL 4 – RESOURCES

Funding for Southern Union is provided through the State of Alabama Education Trust Fund and student tuition and fees. Compliance with the Chancellor of Postsecondary Education directives to increase efficiencies and maintain contingency balances has produced financial stability at Southern Union. Using increase in net assets as an indicator of financial health, Southern Union's net assets increased 14% in 2003 over the previous year and increased 11% in 2004. The college expends 64% of its budget on instruction, instructional support, and scholarships.

The most recent annual audit of Southern Union's financial statements by the state Examiners of Public Accounts found that the college's financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the college. Audit tests revealed no instances of noncompliance and no material weaknesses. The college has received the same clean audit report for the past ten years.

The college serves as the fiscal agent for the Central Alabama Skills Training Consortium which is funded by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. For the fiscal year ended September 30, 2004, the Consortium reported net assets of \$1.3 million and received a clean audit report.

The college recognizes that student needs are constantly changing, and a conscious effort to meet these needs is evident in the renovation and expansion of the physical resources of the college. College buildings currently occupy gross square footage of 594,000 on 187 acres of land. Construction projects in progress total approximately \$30 million for an administration building, fine arts building, maintenance building, baseball complex, student residence facility, and gymnasium renovation. Within the next five years, the facilities master plan calls for the construction of a learning resources center in Wadley; a technology/classroom building, wellness center, and career center in Opelika; and major renovations to the Valley Campus building. These projects will be primarily funded by a bond issue and are expected to total \$15 million.

The Southern Union State Community College Foundation provides support to the college primarily in student scholarships.

GOAL 5 – WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Governor of Alabama, through Executive Order has designated the Department of Postsecondary Education as the “primary, but not sole provider of workforce education and training” for the State. Southern Union is complying with this directive in the following ways.

Southern Union serves as the lead college in administrative oversight and as fiscal agent for the Central Alabama Skills Training Consortium which brings together the resources of all the two-year colleges in the region to share in the provision of non-college specific short-term non-credit skills training. Through the Consortium’s CareerLink partners, the college offers free job seeker and labor market information. Through contacts with various employers, job referrals, work experience, and customized training is made available to individuals. Partners are available to assist job-seeking students with resume development, application completion, soft skills development and other supportive services. Students are encouraged to develop a relationship with the CareerLink and use its Resource Room to assist in all their job search activities. During the last reporting period the CareerLinks in the Central Alabama Consortium served 81,832 through core services.

The college offers a Focused Industry Training Program which provides training for entry-level jobs through an intensive ten-week instructional period that combines instruction in pre-employment skills and manufacturing technology. Program completers receive the Alabama Certified Worker credential.

Within the past year, Southern Union has been given administrative oversight for a center of the Alabama Technology Network (ATN) which is currently housed at Auburn University. ATN’s deliver technical assistance to businesses and incumbent worker training to employees. The college also offers, through its technical division, customized training for business and industry classes that respond to specific training or retraining needs from area businesses.